



Mar Vista School

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Dear Parents:

As you've no doubt heard on the news or read in the paper or online, California is experiencing an outbreak of what the World Health Organization has termed "Influenza-like Illness." The news and others have labeled it "Swine Flu", but only a small number of cases have been confirmed to be that particular strain.

The Governor issued a statewide response to prevent further spread of the illness, and all our schools are working with the County Office of Education, who is working closely with our local public Health Department to develop an appropriate countywide preventative/precautionary response.

No cases have, as yet, been confirmed in our area. However, **anyone with flu-like symptoms should not go to school.**

The **symptoms** of this flu in humans are expected to be similar to regular seasonal respiratory flu: fever, lethargy, lack of appetite, and coughing. (Some people have also reported runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea, but those don't seem to be the prevailing symptoms.)

If someone exhibits these symptoms, they should contact their health care provider by phone. The same applies if a person with flu symptoms has recently traveled to areas with confirmed cases, the closest area for California is Mexico, where the highest rate of this disease has occurred. Again, **call your health care provider first, and ask them what they advise you to do. This is to prevent further spread of infection. Health care providers have received information and are prepared to provide guidance.** (We are a school district, are providing this information as a service, and are not qualified to give medical advice.)

School nurses have received guidance from the Santa Cruz Public Health Department on symptom identification and protocols to address possible swine flu in schools.

Currently, the recommendation is to focus on prevention. Here are some basic health hygiene habits:

1. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
2. Wash your hands **often** with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. (Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.)
3. Try to avoid contact with sick people. (If around someone ill at home, the health recommendation is to stay at least 3 ft away.)
4. If you/your child get sick with flu, it is recommended that you/they stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.
5. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way most easily.
6. **If you or your child is sick – stay at home.**

This outbreak is not considered a pandemic and should be treated as you would any other infectious disease – (following the guidelines above).

In addition, the CDC recommends the following things you can do around your house to prevent the spread of flu:

- Use disposable paper towels or sanitizer wipes to clean things. Don't let germs hang around on cleaning cloths & towels.
- Clean and disinfect countertops & tables regularly – especially before and after meals.
- Clean bathroom sinks and toilet bowls regularly.
- Clean and disinfect electronic devices including: computer mouse, telephones and cell phones, TV remotes, etc.
- Wipe down doorknobs regularly.
- Be sure that each family member uses his/her own toothbrush.
- Discard and replace the toothbrushes of family members who have been ill with a cold or the flu.
- Instruct all family members to wash their hands well. They should wash for as long as it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song TWO times.
- Instruct family members NOT to use the same glasses or forks or spoons to share food.

We will continue to forward you information as we receive updates from Health Service Agencies.

Additional flu information and prevention tools can be found at www.ReadyCaSchools.org, and more information on Swine Flu specifically can be found at Santa Cruz County Health Dept. www.santacruzhealth.org/swineflu/ and the Center for Disease Control's website www.cdc.gov/swineflu/index.htm.

Some additional information:

The World Health Organization relays that the outbreak in Mexico has been predominantly seen in these three areas: Mexico City, San Luis Potosi, and Mexicali. (However, to date only 18 have been **confirmed** as swine flu.)

It is also interesting to note that of the few confirmed cases in the United States, all had **mild** flu-like symptoms and there have been **no deaths**.

Flu-like illnesses normally hit the very young and old the hardest. This illness so far seems to be affecting young adults more.

Sincerely,

Chris Hertz